



Some of NIBIN's Success Stories

The following stories illustrate some of the ways in which NIBIN partner agencies have used the NIBIN system, and found great successes as a result. They are included to demonstrate how the NIBIN system can benefit State and local law enforcement agencies and how it can be used most effectively. While each story is different, an element common to many of them is the police department's commitment to entering all evidence from crime scenes and testfired weapons into NIBIN. Routine evidence entry contributes to NIBIN success in two ways: if evidence is entered for every crime, it will be available in the database for comparison to later evidence. Also, the NIBIN system refines its search capability as the database of searched images grows and more images are available for comparison.

Each story also illustrates one of NIBIN's potential benefits to participating agencies. The Houston Police Department has had success in combining NIBIN and crime analysis. Though the Goldsboro, North Carolina Police Department does not have its own NIBIN equipment, its initiative in working with another agency to enter firearms evidence led to solving a string of robberies. The Boston Police Department's policy of mandatory evidence entry led to an amazing 15 crimes solved through links to a seized weapon. The New Orleans Police Department combined NIBIN with crime mapping to break a deadly gang's crime spree and put 11 gang members in prison. The NIBIN system's ability to compare results electronically allowed the New York City Police Department and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation to identify a potential link six states away.

June 2001

Houston Police Department Uses Crime Analysis and NIBIN To Track A Gun's Path Through Robberies and Murders

The police department of the city of Houston, Texas has made extensive use of the most advanced law enforcement techniques; as a result, police have gained invaluable investigative leads. Houston's substantial commitment to technology such as NIBIN and its use of crime data analysis have worked together, resulting in some dramatic successes.

On June 2, 2000, a male security guard was murdered in the city of Houston. One bullet and one .40 caliber Smith and Wesson cartridge case were recovered from the scene, and they were imaged into NIBIN within hours. A correlation on the entries indicated a link to a gun used in an aggravated robbery on May 20, 2000.

Earlier that same day, two male store clerks were murdered during a robbery. From this crime scene, two bullets and three .40 caliber Smith and Wesson cartridge cases were recovered. They too were imaged immediately. Correlation results indicated that the three crimes were linked, and that the firearm involved in each was a .40 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol.

In examining other recent robberies involving a .40 caliber Smith and Wesson pistol, the department's Crime Analysis unit determined that an aggravated robbery on February 11, 2000 might fit the pattern of these criminals. In this crime, a victim had been robbed

of his wallet at gunpoint. (A credit card stolen from the victim was used after the robbery.) No one was injured in the robbery; a cartridge ejected from a .40 caliber Smith and Wesson was recovered at the scene. On June 6, 2000, a match was discovered between extractor marks on the cartridge and on the evidence in the murders.

The Crime Analysis unit then searched local crime data for recently stolen pistols similar to the murder weapon; only a few weapons met these conditions. The owner of one of these, a pistol stolen five months earlier, submitted a cartridge case from it for imaging. NIBIN correlation identified a link between the cartridge case from the stolen pistol and the murder weapon, providing investigators the make, model and serial number of the murder weapon.

Further investigation of the credit card use after the February aggravated robbery revealed that the clerk processed the card transaction, though the credit card company rejected the transaction. When questioned, the store clerk admitted that he knew the person who used the card, and this clerk's information led the police to the names of the suspects in the aggravated robbery-homicides.

On June 9, 2000, arrest warrants were issued for two suspects. When the first suspect was arrested, he confessed to his involvement in the June 2 murders.

On June 10, 2000, the second suspect was arrested. In his apartment, police found the Smith & Wesson pistol that had been linked to the murders. This defendant was convicted of capital murder on May 30, 2001, and received a sentence of death on June 4, 2001.

about 48,000. While the department does not have its own equipment, it has access to NIBIN technology through other local police departments, such as the Greenville, North Carolina Police Department. The Goldsboro Police Department's proactive use of the NIBIN system resulted in investigative leads that stopped a crime spree and removed three violent criminals from the streets of their city.

On January 3, 2001, a subject entered a food store, displayed a firearm and demanded all the money in the store's cash register. After receiving the money, he discharged the weapon to intimidate the victims, though no injuries resulted. A description of the suspect was provided to the police, and a cartridge casing was recovered from the scene and entered into NIBIN.

On January 4, 2001, a subject entered a deli, discharged a weapon into the ceiling and demanded all the money from the cash register. He obtained the cash from the store and fled the scene in a waiting automobile; there were no injuries during the armed robbery. His physical description did not match the description of the perpetrator in the food store robbery. A fired cartridge casing was recovered from the scene and entered into NIBIN.

On January 7, 2001, a subject entered a video store, displayed a firearm and demanded the cash from the register. After receiving the money, he discharged the weapon as he left the store. His physical description did not match either description provided in the prior two armed robberies. A cartridge casing was recovered from the scene and entered into NIBIN.

On January 11, 2001, a Goldsboro police officer on patrol noticed suspicious activity in a car parked at a gas station. The officer observed the car's occupants attempting to hide items under the seat. When the suspects noticed the officer, they fled in the car. The officer pursued them and, upon stopping their car, observed a magazine for a semiautomatic firearm under the leg of one of the passengers. In the subsequent search of the vehicle, a .25 caliber semi-automatic Beretta handgun was recovered and seized and the driver was charged with carrying a concealed weapon. No other charges were filed at the time of the firearm arrest. The weapon was testfired, and the

May 2001

Goldsboro, North Carolina Police Department: A Little Initiative Leads to a Big Break

The Goldsboro Police Department in Goldsboro, North Carolina is comprised of about ninety sworn law enforcement officers, serving a city with a population of

casing entered into the NIBIN system at Greenville Police Department.

The cartridge casing from the testfire of the confiscated Beretta resulted in a high probability correlation against all three of the casings from the previous three armed robberies. The comparison of the three evidence casings and the testfire casing determined that all were fired from the same weapon: the recovered Beretta firearm.

Following the laboratory confirmation of the firearms match, the Goldsboro Police Department continued their investigation of the armed robbery offenses, but now with suspects linked to the gun used in the offenses. This investigation resulted in the arrest of three subjects; all three were charged in the local court system with multiple offenses, including the armed robbery charges.

The successful closure of the violent armed robbery offenses was provided by the NIBIN system. The NIBIN hit gave investigators a lead that would not have been available in any other way, and followup investigation corroborated the involvement of the three suspects through confessions and witness identifications. The combination of advanced technology and effective police work resulted in the removal from society of three armed and dangerous robbery suspects.

April 2001

Many Casings + 1 NIBIN = 15 Leads for the Boston Police Department

The Boston, Massachusetts, Police Department is aggressive in the use of advanced technology to combat illegal firearms and firearms violence. Departmental regulations require that all recovered evidence relating to firearms be submitted to the laboratory for entry into its NIBIN unit. The power of ballistic imaging technology, and Boston's thorough approach to its deployment, has enabled the department to find links undetectable by other means.

On September 9, 2000, in Boston, several subjects were apprehended and found to be in the possession of three handguns. (The public possession of fire-

arms is in itself a criminal offense in Boston.) The subjects were arrested and charged with the possession offense; the three handguns—a .25 caliber, a .40 caliber and a 9 mm—were all seized as evidence, testfired, and entered into IBIS.

Correlation of the testfires returned several promising similarities. Examiners from the department's firearms laboratory viewed the correlation results and then examined the recalled evidence. The following 15 criminal offenses were positively connected to the testfired weapons:

- On June 2, 1999, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was identified. Several 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered at the scene.
- On October 28, 1999, also in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was identified. More 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered.
- On April 3, 2000, in Boston, one victim was wounded by gunfire. 9 mm cartridge casings were collected at the scene.
- Also on April 3, 2000, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was identified. 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered at the scene.
- On April 19, 2000, in Boston, one victim was wounded by gunfire. In the area, 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered.
- On April 23, 2000, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was identified. 9 mm cartridge casings were collected at the scene.
- On April 24, 2000, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was identified. 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered at the scene.
- On May 9, 2000, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was identified. 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered at the scene.
- On June 8, 2000, in Boston, four victims were shot. 9 mm cartridge casings were collected at the scene of this violent crime.
- On June 15, 2000, in Boston, a victim was assaulted with a firearm. 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered.
- Providence, Rhode Island, is located about one hour south of Boston by car. On June 19, 2000, Providence police responded to the scene of a shooting

and found there a large amount of blood and several 9 mm cartridge casings, but no victim. The firearms evidence recovered was entered into Providence's RBI unit, which communicates with the Boston DAS.

- On June 25, 2000, in the city of Brockton, about 25 minutes south of Boston, an assault with a firearm took place. The 9 mm casings recovered at this scene were transported to the Boston PD for entry into Boston's IBIS unit.
- On July 6, 2000, in the city of Randolph, just south of Boston, three victims were wounded in a shooting. 9 mm cartridge casings were recovered.
- On July 7, 2000, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was located. 9 mm cartridge evidence was collected at the scene.
- On July 20, 2000, in Boston, shots were fired, but no victim was located. Cartridge casings from a .40 caliber firearm were recovered.

A routine arrest for firearms possession charges resulted in the discovery of links among fifteen shooting incidents spread over several police jurisdictions in two states. As a result, each agency involved now has a wealth of information to use in its investigation, including the identities of the possessors of the guns. (In all of the cases, investigation is ongoing.) Without Boston's participation in NIBIN, these crimes would likely not have been linked.

April 2001

New Orleans Police Department Combats Gang Crime With NIBIN and Crime Mapping Technologies

New Orleans is one of several locations where the police department has entered into a partnership with ATF in combating violent crime. In 1996, the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) obtained Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS) technology from the ATF National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) Program. The system was intended to reduce the homicide rate in the city, one of the highest in the nation.

Within the first month of operation, the NOPD Crime Laboratory scored their first "hit" in a case involving

the drive-by shooting of a child. A 12-year old child had been shot and killed on the front steps of his home. Detectives were able to identify a suspect and to recover two handguns and a shotgun from the subject's residence. IBIS aided in the positive identification of one of the firearms recovered as the weapon used in the shooting of the child.

A second firearm was also entered into the IBIS database and was positively linked to evidence recovered in an unrelated drive-by shooting. In this incident, multiple victims had been wounded by gunfire. The NOPD and ATF were able to employ IBIS technology to identify, apprehend, and support the successful prosecution of the shooter, who subsequently received a life sentence. These episodes marked the beginning of a pattern of success in New Orleans.

The most recent NIBIN achievement in New Orleans stems from a long-term NOPD investigation initiated by the Fifth District homicide unit. Detectives began by probing a string of violent and brutal murders in the city. Cartridge casings and bullets collected as evidence from crime scenes, and from the victims, provided invaluable data for the automated evaluation system. The IBIS system soon began to produce links between evidence collected from multiple crime scenes. This data was used by the homicide unit to plot the crime scenes and identify the Seventh Ward of New Orleans as the area most victimized.

ATF became involved in the investigation when the Bureau's firearms trafficking group in New Orleans began following up on the charted hits. Special agents began looking for a relationship between the shootings. Numerous interviews were conducted with witnesses to the shootings, as well as family members and friends of those involved. Police incident reports were reviewed. After evaluation of the evidence, NOPD and ATF investigators combined their resources in pursuit of a violent street gang suspected in the shootings. The gang was known as the "Seventh Ward Soldiers" or "Hardheads."

The NOPD/ATF NIBIN partnership, aided by IBIS technology, connected several different firearms used by the gang in committing a number of drug-related murders and assaults. The NIBIN hits contributed to the identification of witnesses. The resulting infor-

mation enabled investigators to establish a definitive connection between these crimes. This partnership, supported by advanced ballistic imaging technology and aided by the coordination of Federal and State resources, resulted in the Federal indictment of 13 members of the “Seventh Ward Soldiers.” Eleven of the 13 indictees were then convicted in U.S. District Court. Seven of them received life sentences; the sentences of the other four ranged from 14 months to 20 years in length. Only a single defendant was acquitted; one case is still pending.

January 2000

New York and North Carolina Compare Evidence Across Six States, Find A Link Efficiently With NIBIN

On December 19, 1999, a resident was shot and killed in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The Fayetteville Police Department’s investigation into the murder resulted in the issuance of an arrest warrant for a suspect. The arrest warrant information was entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) national computer database, to make other law enforcement agencies aware that the suspect was wanted and should be considered armed and dangerous. Authorities believed that the suspect had returned to his home area of New York City.

On January 12, 2000, New York City Narcotic Task Force officers arrested a subject for narcotics possession, seizing drugs and a 9 mm semi-automatic pistol from the subject. A check of the subject’s name in the NCIC system revealed the arrest warrant outstanding on the murder charge. The subject was extradited to Fayetteville, and awaits trial for the December 19, 1999 murder.

This case highlights an important aspect of the NIBIN system: its capacity to allow the fast and efficient comparison of information, even across large geographical areas. In this case, in order to provide preliminary results without transporting evidence, the agencies took full advantage of their NIBIN links. Each agency entered its relevant evidence into its own NIBIN system – New York entered the bullet and cartridge casing resulting from testfiring the seized weapon, and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NCSBI) entered the bullet and cartridge casing found at the crime scene. When the weapon recovered in New York was testfired using Winchester Silver Tip, the same type of ammunition used in the murder in North Carolina, a very high correlation was found between the testfire and the recovered evidence.

This high correlation result gave the NCSBI cause to have the testfire evidence itself shipped from New York to North Carolina for a confirmatory opinion by a firearms examiner. After examining it, one of NCSBI’s firearms examiners made a positive identification, matching the testfired projectile from the suspect’s firearm to the projectile found at the scene of the homicide.

The linking of the testfire in New York to the evidence in North Carolina demonstrates the usefulness of the NIBIN system. NIBIN enables agencies to conduct comparisons across many jurisdictions, without the packing, shipping, handling and chain of custody problems that often complicate transfer of actual evidence. The NIBIN system also provides valuable advance information: while the correlation result in this case led firearms examiners to pursue comparisons further, NIBIN comparisons could also be invaluable in identifying non-matching comparisons and eliminating unnecessary evidence shipments.